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Expelled Soviets in no hurry to beat U.S. deadline

By Bill Gertz
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Nineteen of the 25 Soviet U.N. diplomats ordered expelled as spies by the United States last week are still in the country.

But the Reagan administration remains firm on kicking the diplomats out, administration officials said yesterday.

An expulsion order handed the Soviets by the U.S. last week gave the 25 diplomats until Oct. 1 to leave the country, and set a limit of 218 Soviet diplomats at the U.N.

One administration official, who declined to be named, said the Soviets will be permitted to fill any U.N. diplomatic posts within the 218 staff limit if U.S. officials can determine the precise number of officials at the Soviet U.N. Mission.

However, U.S. officials have refused to allow any of the 25 diplomats named in the expulsion order to be counted in the 218 staff limit, the official said.

"Those guys are leaving regardless of the 218," the official said.

Reports that 21 of the expelled diplomats — identified by the administration as senior Soviet intelligence officers — left the country yesterday are "not true,"

according to a spokesman at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations.

"We can confirm that two of the diplomats left on the [Sunday] afternoon Aeroflot flight [to Moscow]," said U.S. Mission spokesman Irine Paine, who declined to elaborate.

At the State Department, spokesman Charles Redman said: "We assume the Soviets will comply with our request that all 20 depart by October."

Four of the diplomats ordered out of the country by Oct. 1 were outside the United States when U.S. officials presented the expulsion order to the Soviets, the administration official said.

The official said the Soviets have refused to cooperate in helping the administration determine the actual number of Soviet U.N. diplomats stationed in New York.

The State Department ordered the 25 diplomats to leave the country based on what it said was evidence of Soviets spying under U.N. cover.

Officials said yesterday the administration does not plan to release the names of the 25 diplomats, since identifying the Soviets may present problems if the Soviets should try to take legal action to overturn the expulsion order.

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